

## **AMBER ALERT**

### **Background**

The Amber Alert was created in 1996 as a powerful legacy to nine-year-old Amber Hagerman, a bright little girl who was kidnapped and brutally murdered while riding her bicycle in Arlington, Texas.

The tragedy shocked and outraged the entire community. Residents contacted radio stations in the Dallas area and suggested they broadcast special “alerts” over the airwaves so that they could help prevent such incidents in the future.

Once law enforcement has been notified about an abducted child, they must first determine if the case meets the Amber Alert criteria for triggering an alert.

Each program establishes its own Amber Alert criteria; however, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children suggests three criteria that should be met before an Alert is activated:

1. Law enforcement confirms a child has been abducted.
2. Law enforcement believes the circumstances surrounding the abduction indicate that the child is in danger of serious bodily harm or death.
3. There is enough descriptive information about the child, abductor, and/or suspect’s vehicle to believe an immediate broadcast alert will help.

If the above criteria are met, alert information must be put together for public distribution.

### **Introduction**

ADOT has embarked to launch an Amber Alert program throughout Arizona with the cooperation of the Department of Public Safety (DPS), private industry, and media. Recently, ADOT submitted a request for Amber Alert Program support to FHWA, which resulted in the acquisition of a grant for the implementation of a statewide Amber Alert plan.

The ADOT Amber Alert Program Plan consists of the following elements:

1. Message Dissemination: The Amber Alert message will be disseminated from the Traffic Operations Center (TOC) in accordance with the following systems:
  - a. Variable-Message Sign (VMS): This task will involve the development of policies, procedures, and message formatting for using variable-message sign (VMS). ADOT will display the appropriate Amber Alert messages on its VMSs as directed by the DPS.
  - b. Paging: This task will involve the development of policies, procedures, and message formatting for using alphanumeric pagers. The advantage of alphanumeric pager lies in the fact that more detailed information can be disseminated to the recipient as compared to the VMS, which has restrictions in the number of characters it can display.
  - c. 511 Telephone Service: ADOT will develop a policy and specific message formats for use with its 511-telephone motorist information system when Amber Alerts are activated.
2. EAS: An Emergency Alert System (EAS) receiver equipment at the ADOT TOC will receive the Amber Alert notifications.